

IX. LAND ACQUISITION NEEDS

LAND ACQUISITION STATUS AT ENO RIVER

Although Eno River State Park was originally conceived as an 8,750 acre park, the park's master plan, completed in 1979, calls for a 2,913 acre park. Land needs identified since 1979 have increased the planned size of the park to 3,249 acres (see Figure IX-1). At the end of December, 2002, the park contained 2,868 acres.

The land acquisition objectives for Eno River State Park are both many and varied. Of critical importance is to adequately protect water quality and riverine aquatic habitat. Eno River is home to numerous rare aquatic species and is ranked as nationally significant by the N.C. Natural Heritage Program. Other significant natural areas, including sensitive or rare terrestrial communities and species, require protection as well. Preservation of the scenic quality of the river valley is also an important goal. Providing expanded outdoor recreational and educational opportunities is critical and challenging as public demand for these services constantly increases. Equally challenging and important is to develop and maintain a functional wildlife movement corridor. Lastly, it is necessary to provide the land base and buffer areas needed for park facilities.

FUTURE LAND ACQUISITION NEEDS AT ENO RIVER

In the rapidly growing and urbanizing Orange and Durham counties, it is increasingly challenging to acquire the land necessary to meet all the park goals. In order to adequately address the land acquisition objectives, significant additions to the park are needed. Although the amount and availability of undeveloped land near the park is continually shrinking, most of the future land acquisition needs identified are undeveloped at this time.

Section 1 - Western Terminus

The park should be expanded upstream, moving the western terminus of the park from Lawrence Road to U.S. Highway 70 Bypass near Hillsborough (Figures IX-1, IX-2). This will add slightly more than one mile of river to the park. At a minimum, a 500 foot buffer on each side of the river should be acquired. On the east side of the river, a wider buffer is recommended which would include all of the Poplar Ridge Slopes and Bottom Significant Natural Heritage Area downstream of US 70. Factors such as topography, vegetation and land use will be used to determine the optimum buffer width. Desired buffer width in other sections of the park will be determined in the same fashion.

Approximately 199 acres of land in 16 separate tracts are included in these acquisition needs. Inclusion of this river section in the park will help permanently protect water quality and aquatic habitat while preserving scenic quality and providing additional recreational possibilities.

Section 2 - Fews Ford Area

Significant additions of land are needed to the section of the park between Lawrence Road on the west and Pleasant Green Road on the east. Section 2 refers to the areas south and west of Eno River in this park segment, while Section 3 refers to areas north and east of the river. Most of the Section 2 acquisition needs will provide for continuous state ownership of land adjacent to the river. An unbroken stretch of public land will serve many purposes, especially protection of water quality, aquatic habitat, scenic quality and a corridor for wildlife movement. A portion of a Significant Natural Heritage Area, the Cates Ford Slopes and Uplands site, occurs within the Few's Ford Access Area of the park. The site extends south and west from this section of the park. A total of approximately 1,148 acres is shown as future needs for the park in Section 2a. This includes the property the Division is currently working to acquire north of the AT&T right-of-way which contains approximately 815 acres.

The area south of the AT&T right-of-way has also been identified as being valuable for wildlife and open space needs. This area is section 2b and contains approximately 1,115 acres. Section 2b should be pursued for acquisition only if the piece north of the AT&T right-of-way is acquired for the park.

Section 3 - Buckquarter Creek Area

Approximately 915 acres need to be acquired for addition to the park in Section 3. This will encompass the portion of the Few's Ford Slopes and Uplands site north of the river that is not already within the park. The additions will also provide an adequate buffer area for protecting the site. Buckquarter Creek, an important Eno River tributary, will form a large portion of the park's northern boundary. Section 3 acquisitions will help protect a large area of mature, relatively undisturbed hardwood forest. Though this type of habitat was once common in the Piedmont, it is now fairly rare. An unbroken, publicly owned river corridor will be established and the scenic character of the river will be preserved. With the addition of land along Buckquarter Creek, protection of water quality and aquatic habitat will be greatly strengthened.

Section 4 - Southern Area

The area of the park from Pleasant Green Road on the west to Cole Mill Road on the east comprises Section 4 and contains the southernmost stretch of the river and park. Approximately 141 acres should be added to the park in this area. Several of the identified tracts will provide for continuous state ownership of the river corridor, or will widen it in areas where it is narrow. One larger area of undeveloped land is also included as a future need in this section of the park. These tracts will provide important wildlife habitat while also improving the ability of the river corridor to allow movement of wildlife.

Section 5 - Eastern Terminus

Section 5 extends from Cole Mill Road on the west to the park's eastern terminus at Guess Road. A small number of land acquisitions totaling approximately 101 acres are needed. Most of the acquisitions will continue state ownership of the river corridor or widen the existing corridor. The Open Air Camp property near Guess Road, a former Girl Scout camp and tuberculosis resident camp, may be used as an environmental education facility. One area of undeveloped acreage south of the river has been identified for acquisition. This area will provide additional wildlife habitat while improving the functionality of the wildlife corridor. This will help mitigate anticipated increased public use of the park near Guess Road and the widening of Guess Road to four lanes.

SUMMARY

December, 2002 Size of Eno River State Park	2,868 acres
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Previously Identified Acquisition Needs	540 acres
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Additional Acquisition Needs:

Section 1:	Western Terminus	199 acres
Section 2a:	Fews Ford (north of ROW)	1,148 acres
Section 2b:	Fews Ford (south of ROW)	1,115 acres
Section 3:	Buckquarter Creek	915 acres
Section 4:	Southern Area	141 acres
Section 5:	Eastern Terminus	<u>101 acres</u>

Total of additional needs	<u>3,619 acres</u>
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New Total Planned Size - all sections	7,027 acres
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New Total Planned Size without section 2b	5,912 acres
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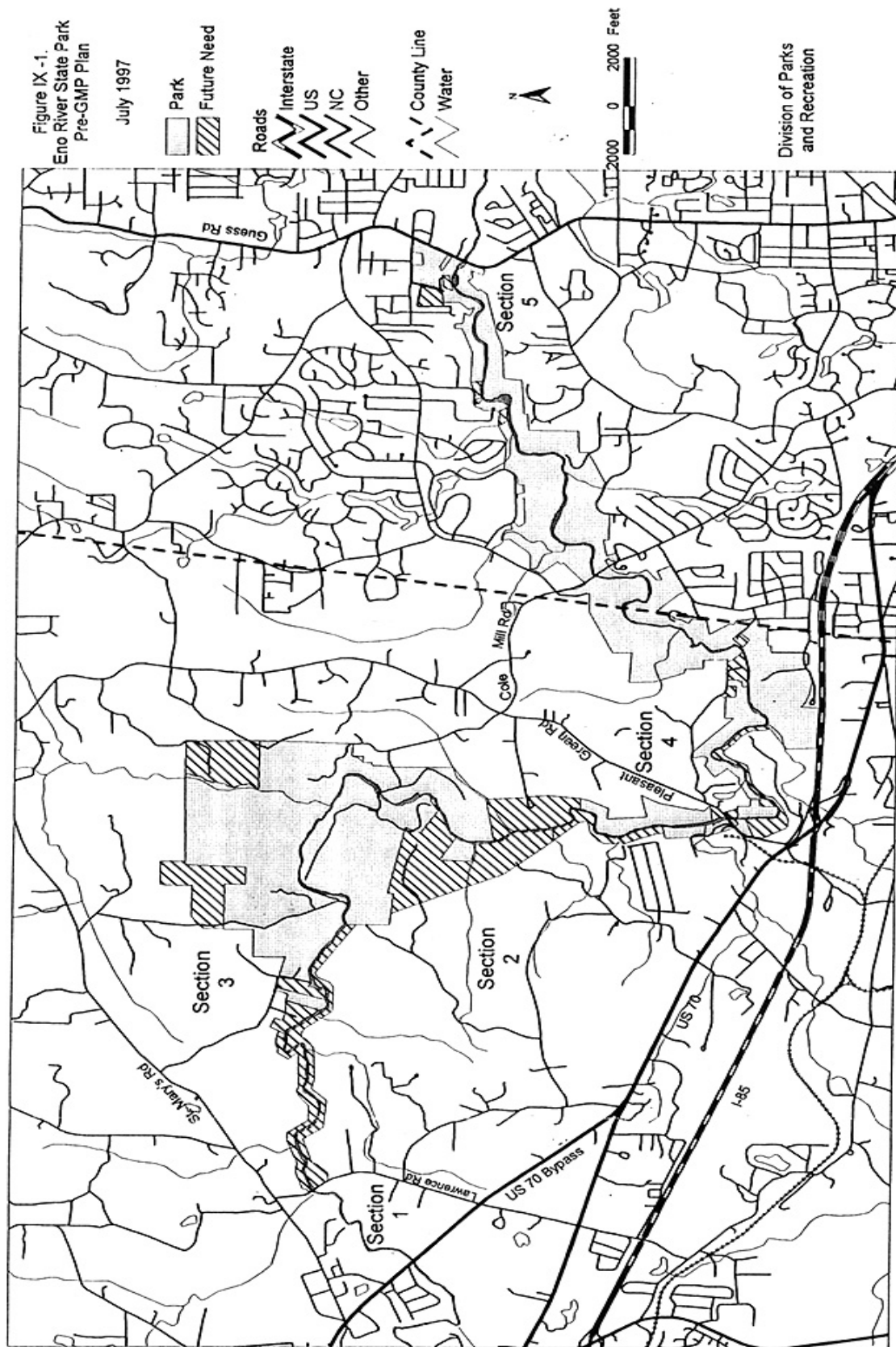


Figure IX-1. Eno River State Park Pre-GMP Plan

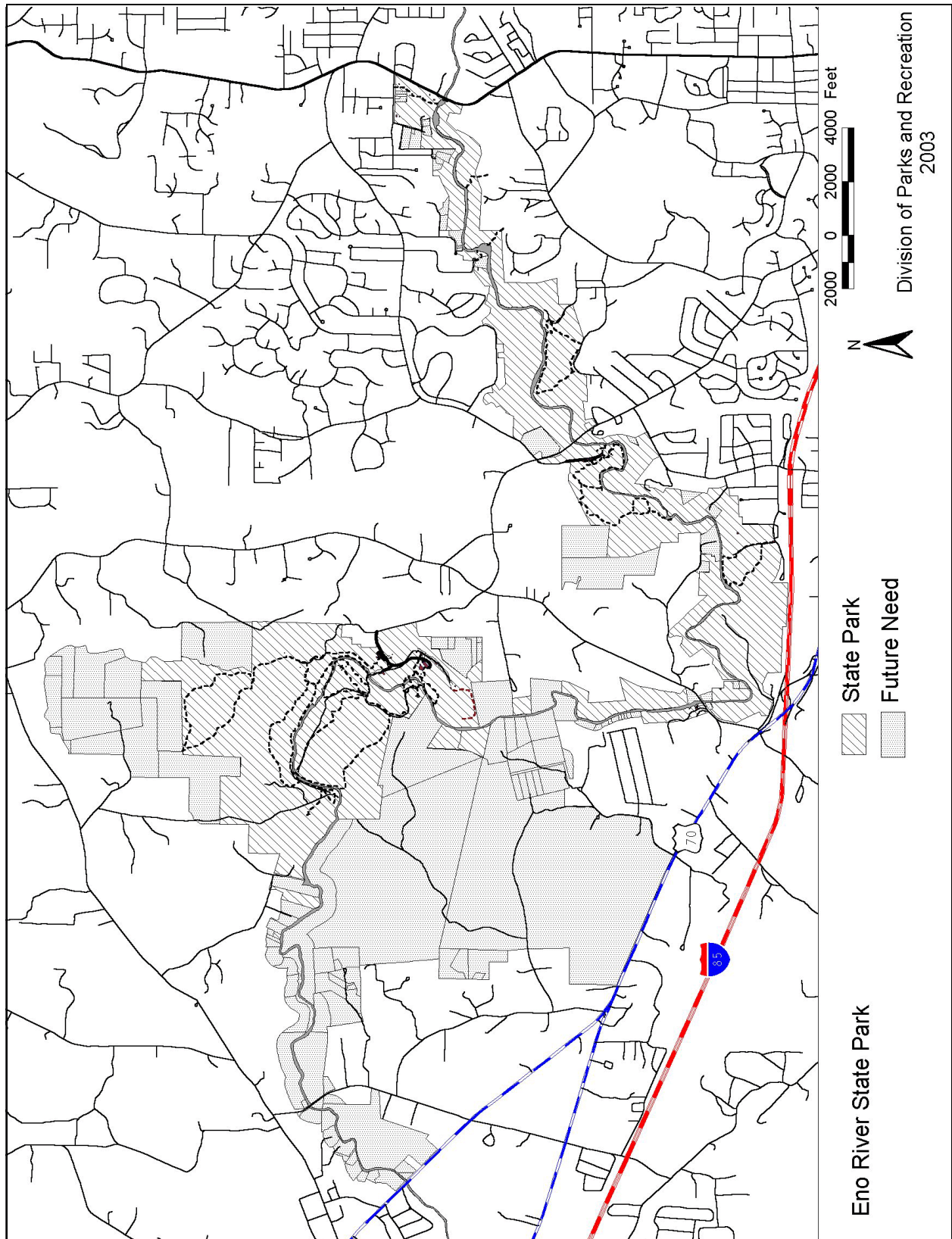


Figure IX-2. Eno River State Park Land Acquisition Needs

LAND ACQUISITION STATUS AT OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN

In 1994, the North Carolina General Assembly authorized the Division of Parks and Recreation to acquire lands at Occoneechee Mountain. In May of 1995, the Division of Parks and Recreation received a grant award from the Board of Trustees of the N.C. Natural Heritage Trust Fund. The award represented partial funding for acquisition of four tracts of land totaling approximately 96 acres. The remainder of the money needed for the first land acquisitions was awarded from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund in May of 1996.

Since receiving those grants and other funds, the Division has acquired 120 acres of land for Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area. Acquisition of two tracts representing approximately 59 acres took place in January 1998. The acquisition included a house that is used as a ranger residence. In addition, a 25 acre parcel at the base of Occoneechee Mountain is leased from the Town of Hillsborough.

FUTURE LAND ACQUISITION NEEDS AT OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN

When completed, Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area will contain approximately 283 acres. The primary goal of land acquisition efforts is to protect the Occoneechee Mountain Significant Natural Heritage Area (Figure IX-3), which is judged to be of statewide significance biologically by the N.C. Natural Heritage Program. Protection will be provided by state ownership of the entire site along with an adequate buffer area. The future needs encompass the mountain, the adjacent undeveloped land and extends to the river. A small area of land will be used for a staff residence and parking area. Space for trailheads and other facilities associated with the state natural area will also be provided.

Future needs include acreage along the North side of the Eno River that provides a 300-foot buffer along the river. This land will provide a vegetative buffer to help maintain water quality and provide wildlife corridors. It will also provide scenic protection by preventing development along the river.

SUMMARY

December 2001 Size of the State Natural Area	120 acres
Land Acquisition Needs	<u>163 acres</u>
Total Planned Size	283 acres

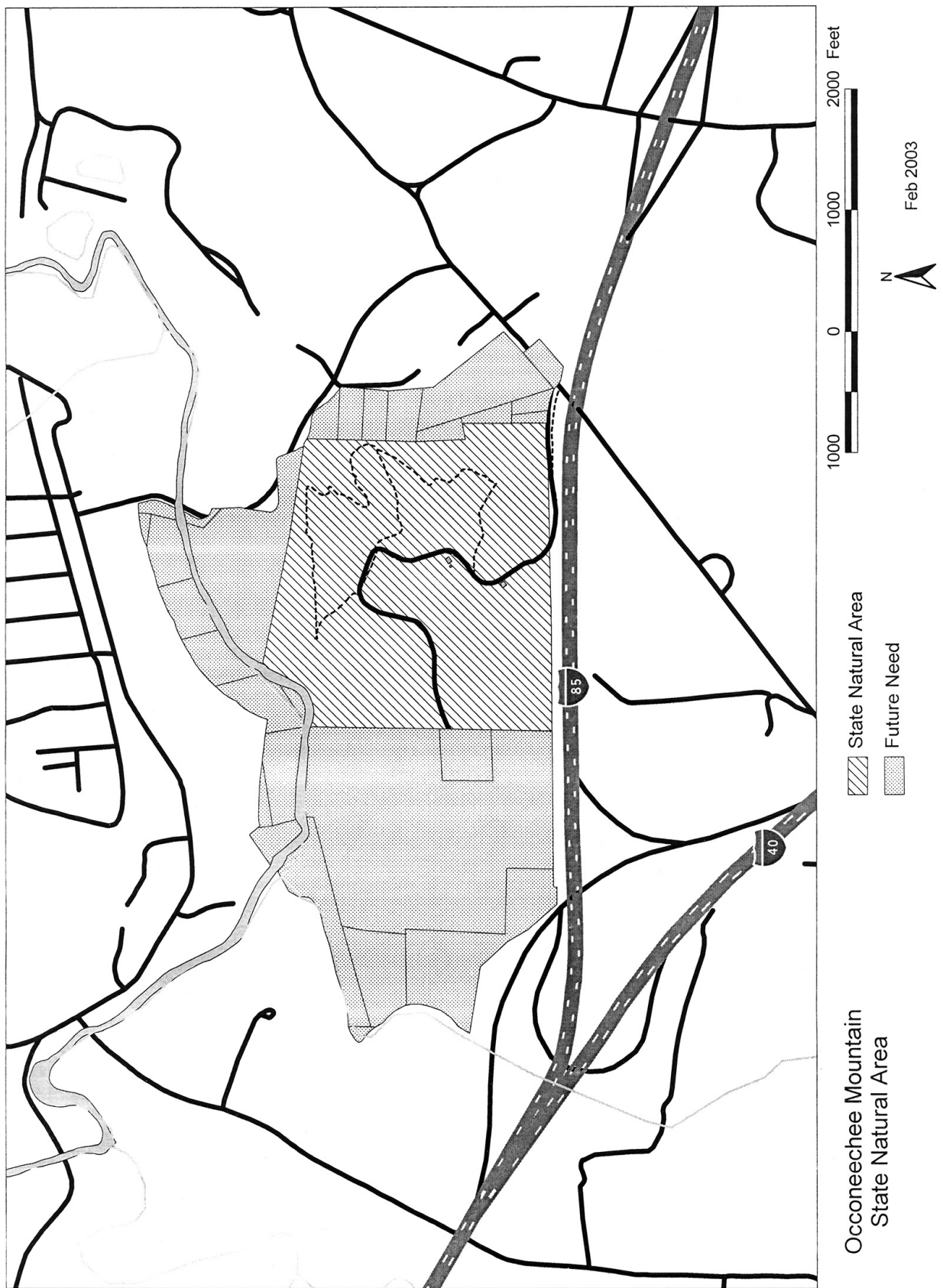


Figure IX-3. Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area Land Acquisition Needs. February, 2002